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THE DIGNITY OF THE CHRISTIAN MINISTRY.

"I magnify mine office."—Rom. xi: 18.

No two names can be found, designating the same person, that suggest wider extremes of moral character than Saul the persecutor and Paul the apostle. The announcement of the former presents to the mind the embodiment of some of the most repulsive elements of depraved humanity; and he who bears it stands before us a cruel bigot, a bitter reviler, a bold blasphemer, whose concentrated energies are devoted to the single work of making "havoc of the Church," sustained by an intensity of malignant feeling, which is constantly "breathing out threatenings and slaughter" against the disciples of the Lord. At the mention of the latter, the painful vision becomes instantly dissolved, and the mind is contemplating the character of one who, possessed of the highest attributes of sanctified humanity, of enlarged charity, unwavering perseverance, and unbounded love to God and man, is preaching the "faith which he once destroyed."

Here is, indeed, a wonderful contrast. Well may we ask how the mighty transformation was effected. And it is no less a dictate of reason than of Scripture to reply, What power but that which is absolutely infinite—which at first called the earth out of nothing, and from the shapeless void evoked light, and order, and beauty, could subjugate and harmonize the fierce and warring elements that had controlled, with such fearful authority, this mighty and rebellious spirit? In the simple story of the journey to Damascus are given the details of this moral revolution; and in the light that shone about him, "above the brightness of the

sun," and in the "voice" that spoke to his inmost being, we detect the invincible agency by which Saul the persecutor became Paul the apostle. The ferocity of the lion has given place to the gentleness of the lamb. The heart, once the seat of the most violent passions,—pride, cruelty, malignant hate,—has become the altar from which ascends the hallowed incense of the tenderest emotions, the holiest affections—humility, pity, universal love. He is henceforth engaged in a work different from that which had before engrossed his powerful energies; a work corresponding to the blessed change that had passed upon him. Called to be an apostle, to bear the tidings of salvation to his fellow-men, he girded himself for the glorious enterprise, and, with unflinching devotion and heroic courage, endured every hardship, encountered every danger, bearing to the last the "testimony of a good conscience" and the smiles of an approving God. It is from the lips of such an one, while suffering the contempt of the learned, the scorn of the great, and the opposition of all, that we hear the animating exclamation, "I magnify mine office."

The word "magnify," employed to express the qualities of an object or pursuit, conveys the idea of something highly esteemed, exalted, honorable, glorious. And this is the estimate which Paul put on the office he sustained as a minister of Jesus Christ. In the deep convictions of his sanctified spirit, that office was invested with such true moral dignity, such unrivaled excellence, such surpassing honor, that, instead of yielding to depression, or shrinking with conscious shame before the enemies of the cross, he, on the contrary, cordially exulted in his calling; and in the contemplation of its divine appointment, its elevated relations, and its ample resources, he never failed to gather strength for the duties it imposed, and courage for the trials it occasioned.

And sure I am, my brethren, that by all who justly apprehend the nature of the ministry of reconciliation, the language of the apostle cannot be regarded as extravagant, but as containing words of truth and soberness.

To meet the spirit of the occasion,* I have selected as the theme of my discourse, **THE DIGNITY OF THE CHRISTIAN MINISTRY**, suggested by the brief but sententious passage before us—"I magnify mine office."

The dignity of the Christian ministry may be seen by contemplating—

The authority by which it acts ;
The objects which it contemplates ;
The means which it employs ;
The aids which are pledged to it.

* Inauguration of Rev. William H. Campbell, D.D., as Professor of Biblical Literature in the Theological Seminary of the Reformed Dutch Church, New-Brunswick, N. J.

I. The authority by which it acts.

That the Christian ministry has had its origin in an appointment directly from Heaven, it were folly for any to question, who bow to the teachings of revelation. This claim has been asserted from the beginning, and in not a single instance has it ever been modified or relinquished. We conclude, as by intuition, that it pertains to God alone to institute an office, the appropriate functions of which have exclusive reference to spiritual duties and relations. This prerogative He has ever exercised in all the appointments of His kingdom of grace, and its record is found in the history of every dispensation of religion.

The first who ever reared an altar and presented an oblation was, doubtless, the common progenitor of our race; and, as no dictate of reason could have led him to suppose that the streaming blood of an immolated victim could expiate the guilt of his soul, we must conclude that he acted under the sanction of a divine command. The paternal and sacerdotal functions were thus for a time united. And when, at a subsequent period, the family relation became expanded into the wider circle of the state or commonwealth, the patriarch united in himself the prerogatives of both king and priest, as coördinate functions and powers.

There was thus, under the earliest dispensations of religion, associated with the priestly office, something dignified and venerable; and, as a divine appointment, there was obviously a sacredness inseparable from the person of him who, in the character of intercessor, and as a constituted medium between the visible and the invisible, stood officially nearer to the Divinity than did the rest of the people.

At a still later period—among the nation of Israel—the institution of the priesthood became more clearly defined, was restricted to a single tribe, and made hereditary in the family of Aaron. The solemn dignity and awful sacredness with which it became henceforth invested, are seen in the imposing circumstances that accompanied its appointment at the base of Sinai, in the minuteness of detail that marked its elaborate and complicated ritual, and the stern jealousy with which it was guarded against the intrusion of any who might profanely covet its prerogatives.

Yet this system, appointed as it was by divine authority, was nevertheless designed to answer only a temporary purpose. It was too ceremonial and material, too carnal and sanguinary, for a perpetual or ultimate institution. It was felt by the wise and holy of the people themselves, that the sacerdotal office, though the centre of their hopes, venerable and glorious as it was, was but typical of another and higher order of things. It was felt by the pious Jew that the blood of his numberless victims had no inherent power to put away sin, and that the fragrance of his incense, floating perpetually toward heaven, could not commend his imperfect prayers to a holy God. He knew that these only

prefigured another altar, another sacrifice, and another priesthood, and looked forward in faith and hope to the time when revolving years should usher in the promised Messiah. It was the same conviction, begotten, doubtless, by some partial communion with the Jewish Scriptures, that led the Grecian sage, with a faith stronger than his philosophy could inspire, to utter the memorable declaration, that, without a messenger from Heaven itself, man could never discover nor pursue the path of duty. The hope of the Israelite was at length realized, and the oracular dream of the pagan philosopher fulfilled. From the mysterious abode of the Eternal, across the hitherto impassable gulf that separates the visible from the invisible, came at last the Celestial Messenger, the Divine Teacher, the "great High Priest of our profession." He came to execute the sacerdotal office in the mysterious union of the human and divine natures; the victim was Himself; the objects, the guilty inhabitants of this world; and the interested and benefited spectators, "thrones, dominions, principalities, and powers."

The dignity of such a priest, the awful grandeur of such a sacrifice, what mind can conceive, what language express? And yet it is from this Great High Priest, from the essential divinity of his nature, from the unspeakable glory of his mediatorial office, that the dignity of the ministerial character is derived, as to the supreme authority by which it executes its high and solemn functions.

I say not that the ministry of the New Testament is in all respects identical with that of the Old. There is now no official earthly priesthood, for the one great Sacrifice has been offered "once for all;" there is now no visible altar, no ritual ceremonial, no outward incense. And yet I do say, that, as a divinely appointed agency to meet the spiritual wants of the world, the ministry is not peculiar to the Christian dispensation. The ministry, and, in its most important attributes, the *Christian* ministry, too, has existed under every revelation of the gospel as the medium of spiritual intercourse between Heaven and earth. Change of names, or of forms, or of outward service, does nothing to disturb what is strictly essential to the great ministerial function, nor to mar the integrity of that gracious system in which it has ever held an indispensable place.

The last and highest type of this order of human agency, however, has been established by the authority of "*God manifest in the flesh.*" Hence it is recorded, "When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men; . . . and he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers." The first two of these orders were obviously extraordinary and temporary; and hence, with the close of the canon of inspiration, when prophets had declared the will of God to its completion, and apostles had rendered ample

testimony to the resurrection, there was no longer need of the exercise of their peculiar functions, and they were consequently suspended. Only the last two—"evangelists," together with "pastors and teachers"—can with any show of reason be regarded as ordinary and perpetual; and these constitute, really and truly, the ministry of the present dispensation. To this ministry, the commission and promise which Christ gave to his disciples originally, remain applicable and efficient, in perpetuity; and these gifts of the august Founder of this ministry, invest it with an essential and relative dignity that attaches to no other existing human agency.

The source of our authority, then, is God; the charter of our rights, prerogatives, and powers, bears the signature of Heaven! And hence, also, the appropriateness of the designation—"ambassadors for Christ." How sublimely expressive of unequalled honor! Earthly ambassadors are called to represent the person and guard the interests of the courts by whom they are appointed. The minister of Christianity is an ambassador of Christ, a representative on earth of the august court of the God of Heaven. And as the ambassadors of this world partake of the dignity of that authority whose high commission they bear, so has the minister of Jesus reflected upon him the honor and glory of him who is King of Zion.

"There stands the messenger of truth; there stands
The legate of the skies! His theme divine,
His office sacred, his credentials clear."

Let me not be charged with an undue estimate of the office of which I speak. I make a distinction between the office itself and the earthen vessel to which this treasure of the gospel is committed. In myself I am nothing. I am sorrowfully conscious of manifold defects and infirmities. But, however lightly I may and must esteem myself, still I know that things, common and mean in themselves, acquire unspeakable excellence and importance from association and destiny; and looking, therefore, at my heavenly credentials, and tracing my commission to its high and exclusive source, I can hold up my head, for I know I am speaking on behalf and acting under the authority of the God of the universe! This it is that exalts my vocation; and this it is that justifies every minister of Christ, however weak and imperfect in himself, in shouting the exclamation of the apostle, "*I magnify mine office.*"

II. The dignity of the Christian ministry may be seen, in the second place, by considering *The objects it contemplates.*

Time will allow me to speak of but few of these, and such only as have reference to the present and future welfare of man. In all the departments of man's social condition, we discover ample proofs of the salutary influence which the ministry is fitted to

exert. Our own observation, as well as the voice of history and the deductions of reason, bears ample testimony on this point. Select a community in any part of the world, where is found an enlightened and faithful ministry, and compare it with any other where the voice of the herald of salvation has not been heard, and the mighty contrast that obtains between the social and moral condition of the two must be decisive of the salutary influence of this sacred institution. In the one case, sobriety, virtue, intelligence, and prosperity will be visible ; in the other, disorder, vice, ignorance, and degeneracy will be the predominant elements. Let the functions of the ministry be suspended, in the most orderly society around you, and the Sabbath will no longer be regarded ; let the Sabbath be abolished, and the most efficient restraint upon human depravity is taken away, and the most powerful barrier to the progress of anarchy, social and moral, is at once destroyed.

There is no system of philosophy adequate to arrest this downward tendency of fallen humanity. Systems, I know, have been devised, and no age has been more prolific in such schemes than the present ; but all have failed to accomplish what they promised. The very best of them, so far from exerting any really elevating and purifying influence upon the heart, have been found only powerful agents in increasing its blindness and depravity. They may have modified, to some extent, the grosser forms of vice, but they have only refined them into more pervasive and destructive elements of degradation and ruin.

The influence of the pulpit upon the *intellectual* condition of man, is a subject worthy the profoundest thought of all who are lovers of their kind. If you trace the progress of human knowledge in all the diversified relations of the arts and sciences, you will unquestionably find that the source of its reality, its depth, its comprehensiveness, is the Bible. But whence came the Bible, and how is its influence rendered most practically beneficial ? It came from God, it is true ; but it came through the medium of the ministry of holy men, who spake and wrote as "they were moved by the Holy Ghost." There is a sense, then,—a most important sense,—in which the Bible was written *by* the ministry as well as *for* it ; in which the ministry sustains to that sacred volume the relation of *author* as well as *preacher* ; and the latter of these is as important in its place, for the accomplishment of the objects of divine benevolence toward this world, as the former. And wherever the Bible, unclasped and unchained, has kept its place in the pulpit, and the man of God has been permitted to proclaim its contents to the people in simplicity and godly sincerity, intellect has received its highest impulses, and the energies of the spiritual nature have been aroused to their noblest exertions. There is no agency under heaven that can bear with so much power upon the convictions and motives of humanity as the ministry of the gospel.

Compared with the attainments of the human mind under the influence of Christianity, all its achievements amid the most favorable auspices of paganism are light and trivial. Compare the progress of the world, during the four thousand years that preceded the Advent, with its progress during the less than two thousand that have since elapsed, and tell me what are the practical fruits of the aggregate wisdom of the former, compared with those of the latter period? What, for the most part, but childish hypotheses, vague speculations, elaborate triflings? I have no disposition to depreciate the intellect of the sages of antiquity. In painting and sculpture, in poetry and eloquence, they doubtless attained a distinguished position. I only mean to say, that their highest attainments in mental, moral, and physical science were comparatively insignificant, and in their influence for the elevation and purity of the people, almost powerless. Long before the apostle Paul had begun to preach to the Gentiles the doctrine of the cross, philosophers of various sects and countries had published their diversified systems of ethics and religion; but between the most sincere and distinguished of them all there was a constant conflict of opinion. Upon no one point of real importance was there any substantial agreement. Much was uttered concerning the "spirit that is in man," and its innate longings after happiness; but they were never able to analyze its mysterious powers, or satisfy the desires which they consciously cherished. They were ignorant of the nature of good and evil, and disagreed even as to the divine existence. If they cherished hopes of the immortality of the soul, they were continually haunted by the most painful misgivings. Of the resurrection of the body they had not the slightest conception, and upon the region beyond the grave there rested the veil of an impenetrable darkness! It was reserved for teachers mightier than those of the Academy or the Lyceum to proclaim to the world those great principles upon which its elevation, purity, and glory are made to rest. It was the prerogative of the fishermen of Galilee, though in a sense different from what was originally charged upon them, to "turn the world upside down." And the intellectual and moral revolutions that every where marked their course, gave a sublime attestation to the mighty power they were appointed to wield. From that period the human mind received an impulse which has carried it on in a course of progressive development to the present hour, and which will never be impeded nor arrested while the pulpit continues to exert its legitimate influence upon the nations of the earth.

The great principle of the inductive philosophy by which such sublime discoveries have been made, serving to improve so greatly the condition of human existence, and, as it were, enlarging the boundaries of the universe, was not *invented* by Bacon, though it is connected with his name. It was only *discovered* by

him where it had always existed—in the Bible—and applied to the investigation of the laws of nature. The ministry of Christ had long, had always been familiar with it; for all its instructions had from the beginning been based upon and deduced from the authentic and incontrovertible facts of divine revelation. The honor, therefore, does not belong primarily to the coronet of Bacon, but is reflected to him from the crown of the ministry of Jesus.

There is not a spot on the map of the world, on which this ministry has exerted its legitimate influence, where the human mind has not steadily advanced in the scale of intelligence, and sought to realize the august destiny of its rational and immortal nature. And no where has there been a retrocession in these onward movements, no where has darkness at any time returned upon the minds of the people, where "gross darkness" had not first enveloped those who ministered at the altars of religion. The gloom of the middle ages had never found a place in the history of the world, had not the Bible been first closed, and its authorized expounders proved recreant to their high and solemn responsibilities.

In like manner must it be said that the ministry of the gospel constitutes a most *essential element in the progress of civilization*. The science of government, the theory of civil and religious liberty, are properly understood and appreciated only where the pulpit is true to its glorious mission. I cannot enter into any analysis of this point, though the field is both ample and inviting. Suffice it to say, there is not now, and there never has been a nation on earth possessing or valuing rational freedom, among whom the ministry of Christ has not exerted its benign influence. Christianity has effected, in this respect, entire and most salutary revolutions, wherever its principles have been faithfully inculcated, thus not only meliorating the theory of general government, but renovating and rendering congenial and healthful the whole system and details of social life.

It is true, then, not only in poetry, but also in plain prose, that

—“The pulpit, in the sober use
Of its legitimate peculiar powers,
Must stand acknowledged, while the world shall stand,
The most important and effectual guard,
Support, and ornament of virtue's cause.”

But to the ministry of the gospel appertains still higher honors, as it is appointed to confer yet greater benefits on the world. Were the good which Christianity achieves on behalf of man limited to temporal relations only; were its principles, which have the greatest certainty as demonstrated truths; which form the noblest subjects of contemplation; which refine the taste, restrain the passions, and purify the heart; which curb the selfishness of communities, and establish the most elevated social

polity among the great brotherhood of nations ; were these limited in their influence to the narrow sphere of the present life, even then Christianity were indeed worthy the admiration, the homage, the devotion of the world. But these benefits, notwithstanding their intrinsic value, are trifling considerations in comparison with others. The gospel has to do preëminently with man's spiritual nature, and has a direct bearing upon interests that affect his eternal destiny.

That the moral world is in a fallen, alienated, and lost condition, is a truth attested as well by individual consciousness, and the records of universal history, as by the testimony of revelation. In his depravity, the revolted creature is conscious of insecurity, and the irrepressible monitions of conscience beget painful anxieties and fears, which no instructions from the oracle of nature have adequate power to allay. No ray of mercy from the throne of God has penetrated to the dark and disordered spirit ; and his inmost being is constantly disturbed by premonitions of judgment, and the dreadful forebodings of eternal sorrow. It is in reference to this condition of humanity, that the command is given to the ministry of Christ, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature." And, in obedience to this command, sustained by the authority and animated by the spirit of its glorious Author, the ministry goes forth on its benevolent mission. It preaches the gospel—the gospel as a *source of light*, making known a new element in the character of God—an element of mercy. And while it represents human guilt in all its dark and dread atrocity, and denounces against it the displeasure of the Most High, it at the same time points to Calvary as the source of expiation, and the medium and pledge of a full and eternal pardon. It preaches the gospel as a *source of power*, by which the bondage of depravity is broken, the prey is taken from the mighty, and the captive is made free. It preaches the gospel as a *source of consolation*, by which the spirit is sustained and cheered amid all the trials of life, till death itself falls a conquered monster at his feet, and he is away to the bosom of his Father and his God.

And I ask, must not the instrumentality that stands connected with such glorious results as these, be of all others the most dignified and important ? It is the province of this agency, and of none other, to stand at the very fountain-head of all grace, and to proclaim to the entire world, as the representative of the Divinity, that glorious device of mercy, which is emphatically "the wisdom of God, and the power of God unto salvation." It is the prerogative of the minister, *officially and with authority*, to take his place on the summit of Calvary, and from amid the effulgent glory by which it is crowned, to preach the cross, — not the wood of the cross, not the figure of the cross, but the doctrine of the cross ; to preach the mercy of Him by

whose blood the cross was stained; to make known the promise which on the cross was sealed, the redemption which on the cross was achieved, the new and better covenant which on the cross was ratified, and that glorious and powerful influence which goes forth from the cross to enlighten, regenerate, and save the world. And tell me, does not he hold a most sublime position, and does not an awful dignity attach to his vocation, who is thus called to study, to expound, to proclaim this amazing theory of grace, which not only contributes so much to man's present good, but which, operating upon the highest elements of his being, transforms his spiritual relations, changes his spiritual appetences, elevates his spiritual condition, and ultimately glorifies his spiritual nature? Surely there is infinite propriety and reason in the rapturous exclamation of the apostle, "*I magnify mine office.*"

III. We see the dignity of the ministry, *thirdly*, by contemplating the *means which it employs*.

Though several agencies might be mentioned, having a combined and concurrent influence in accomplishing the objects of the ministry, yet there is one that holds such a pre-eminence above all others, that we shall confine our attention to it alone; it is TRUTH — "*the truth as it is in Jesus.*" This is the "*sword of the Spirit,*" in wielding which, the ministry is, instrumentally, to achieve the conquest of the world. It is appointed to expound, illustrate, and enforce the entire system of Revelation. And what grand and sublime disclosures of truth are there made! How comprehensive and profound, how noble and soul-stirring the themes there presented for investigation! The being and attributes, the works and government of God; the apostasy and the depravity of man; the dispensation of mercy for his recovery and salvation; the incarnation and resurrection of the Redeemer; the mission of the Spirit; the regeneration of the soul, its immortality and its endless destiny! These are glorious subjects, embracing in their mighty sweep eternity past and eternity to come; all that is mysterious in God, all that is interesting in man; all that is attractive in Heaven, all that is terrible in Hell; and involving considerations ever fitted alternately to attract and appal, to awe with reverence and thrill with joy!

There are features that mark the truth which the ambassador of Christ is appointed to proclaim as the means of the world's regeneration, that incontestibly prove its adaptedness to this work.

It is *infallible* truth. The most highly prized productions of men are marred by pervading imperfections. But the Author of Revelation is pre-eminently the "*God of truth.*" He dwelleth in light, and hath no fellowship with darkness. And as the beam partakes of the highest purity of the source whence it emanates, the message which the ministry is appointed to pro-

claim, must be light, as its source is light, and in it is no darkness at all.

It is *comprehensive* truth; and in this respect meets all the demands of the human intellect. Even those truths indicated by the volume of nature, stand out upon the page of Revelation in bolder relief; while others are there developed, concerning which the oracle of nature is utterly silent. Nature knows nothing of a system of grace, and consequently, however her teachings may be adapted to instruct, they are not adequate to save.

It is truth characterized by *simplicity*. It is based upon facts,—facts susceptible of the most ample proof, and on a level with the capacity of all. Here grandeur and beauty, simplicity and sublimity, are so inimitably combined and harmonized, that while it furnishes the profoundest instruction to the sage, it may at the same time be apprehended, appreciated, and loved by the child.

It is truth no less distinguished for its *harmony with the convictions of reason*. In nothing is violence done to any conclusion reached by a legitimate process of rational investigation. And though, as in nature, there are parts of the great system of revealed truth that are above and beyond the grasp of reason, there are none that are contrary to it. There are none, bowing to which in reverent submission, human reason is not elevated and honored.

And I add, also, that the teaching of the gospel message harmonizes no less fully with the *analogy of nature*. Indeed, the progressive developments of science in all ages, have served only to give additional illustration and confirmation to the truths of Scripture. Nature has never spoken one word in opposition to Revelation. There is not a star that shines in the deep vault of heaven, there is not an insect that floats in the radiance of the summer's sun, there is not a flower that breathes its fragrance upon the air, there is not a rock that has its place in the deep-laid foundations of the earth, but gives a distinct and obvious confirmation to the utterances of Revelation. These two great sources of truth cannot be in conflict with each other; and when their testimony is properly interpreted, their mutual harmony establishes the claims of both to the same divine and glorious authorship.

Such then is the great instrumentality which the ministry is to employ in the work assigned to it. It is *truth*; truth in the strength of its principles—truth in the grandeur of its discoveries—truth in the power of its motives—truth revealed in the Bible, corroborated in nature, and illustrated in every department of the mental, moral, and physical universe. It is this instrumentality that the preacher of the gospel is to bring to bear upon the minds and hearts of his fellow-men, and by

which he is to labor for their salvation. To investigate, explain, and inculcate *truth*, is the great business of his life; this is his "calling of God," and to this he is to devote all the energies of his being.

And if, in passing, I might pause to note an inference that forces itself upon the mind, I would say, that if the relation which the ministry sustains to the truth of God be distinguished for its dignity, it is no less distinguished for its *responsibility*. If the preacher be thus constituted the expounder of truth to the world, is it not his imperative duty to become himself familiar with its teachings? The science of theology is of all others the most profound, and consequently demands the best mental qualifications, as it furnishes scope for the highest order of intellectual endowments. And yet the impression rests upon many minds, that the work of the ministry requires but little ability and little qualification. And it too often happens that when the candidate for this holy office leaves the theological school, he partially, if not wholly, abandons those habits of close investigation and critical research which he was taught there to cultivate. And the consequences resulting from such a course are too obvious to be mentioned.

It is a common remark, that education, properly so called, is the business of the life; that the student, when leaving the halls of science, instead of abandoning study, and resting in inglorious satisfaction, as if he had already attained or were already perfect, should be constantly incited by a thirst for knowledge—an "appetite that grows by what it feeds on"—to prosecute his investigations, employing former acquisitions as the means of making still higher attainments. And if this be true of those engaged in secular studies and pursuits, with how much greater emphasis must it apply to the student of the sacred oracles, the accredited teacher of his fellow men in the sublime mysteries of Christianity! Does it not devolve upon such an one to bring to his high duties, not only zeal, sincerity, and faith, but also the utmost force of his intellect, illumined by all the light which the ever-expanding circle of knowledge can diffuse?

If God has condescended to give to the world a written revelation of his will, and has, as by a protracted miracle, preserved that sacred depository of truth uncontaminated from age to age, must it not be the duty and privilege of the authorized expounder of the Sacred Scriptures to be able at all times to go to the original record, and there learn "what is the mind of the Spirit," in the very language which the Holy Ghost has employed? If it be deemed so important that the productions of the poets, historians, and orators of antiquity should be studied in the garb in which they invested their sentiments, as they came fresh and glowing from the inspirations of genius; is it too much to ask, that the same amount of labor should be

brought to bear upon the Book of books, assisted by those ample means and appliances which biblical literature and collateral studies are enabled to furnish?

It has been said, indeed, that a very limited acquaintance with Scripture is sufficient to answer the great purpose of the soul's conversion, and therefore, that the minister is not called upon to engage in such profound investigations of the sacred record.

But, granting the premises to be true, are we to pause at the mere point of conversion? Is not the edification, the enlargement, the elevation of the regenerated spirit, a most distinguished privilege and a most commanding duty? Are not expanded views, solemn impressions, transcendent motives needed, that the soul may be properly educated for its high destiny? And whence can these be derived so readily and successfully as from the deep things of Revelation? The gospel is indeed fitted to bless the ignorant, and guide him on the way to heaven; but it is unspeakably more influential, and a thousand-fold more attractive to him who has become deeply versed in its profound and solemn mysteries. The material firmament would reflect the same light and shed the same genial influence, though every eye regarded it but as a mere canopy, designed only to curtain the globe we inhabit, and though every mind that contemplated it were ignorant of the gorgeous retinue of worlds that sweep through its limitless expanse. Yet when, by the aid of astronomy, the awful depths of immensity are penetrated, and the mind is led to gaze with an enlarged and strengthened vision upon the wonders that rise from the fathomless abyss, are we to say that no real good is derived, that no substantial benefit is experienced? When those dazzling points that stud the evening sky — once scarcely noticed except with childish curiosity — become enlarged into majestic spheres, and orbs before unseen and unknown, stand out, inconceivable in number, in magnitude and effulgence, how does the soul become impressed and awed by such sublime demonstrations of the wisdom, power, and grandeur of the Creator; and where else can it be found in an attitude so fitted to sympathize in the language of the Psalmist, "Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; in wisdom hast thou made them all?" And thus it is with the more glorious firmament of Revelation. How is faith strengthened, and reverence deepened, and devotion brightened, when its mysterious depths are explored with diligence, meekness, and prayer. When that which was before but dimly visible, is seen to shine with inconceivable lustre; and that which was before contracted, expands into illimitable dimensions; and orbs of truth before undiscovered, burst forth on every side, filling the field of spiritual vision with the radiance of a steady and unutterable glory, how irre-

sistibly is the soul impelled to exclaim, "Oh the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!" And how does it seem to realize the fulfilment of the apostle's prayer, that it may "comprehend with all saints, what is the breadth and length, and height and depth of the love of God, which passeth all knowledge; and be filled with all the fulness of God."

But we advance still farther, and say that it is both the privilege and duty of the minister, so far as circumstances will allow, to cultivate an acquaintance with the progressive discoveries of natural science, as furnishing appropriate and important aids in the development and illustration of Scripture. Far be it from me to insinuate that Revelation is susceptible of improvement;—it is a perfect system. I only mean that it is capable of being better understood, and that every advance of science may be made instrumental of giving greater distinctness and impressiveness to many of its truths. Creation is just as truly a divine revelation to man as Scripture itself. They are kindred volumes. Christianity does not abrogate—it only completes and confirms the teachings of natural religion. It does not demand that we should shut our eyes to the light that is shed around us in the wonders of the earth and the glory of the heavens; that we should steel our hearts to all the emotions that rise within us, and the impressions that come to us from without; that we should close our ears against the myriad voices of universal history, of daily providence, of unfolding science. These significant utterances Christianity recognizes and corroborates, and where they shed no light, she diffuses a benignant effulgence. Christianity thus bears an obvious and intimate relation to the vast and ever-expanding domain of science, and is capable at once of illustrating and being illustrated by all the works and ways of God. Both therefore should be studied together, as continued commentaries upon each other; and the minister of the gospel who disparages the claims of science by shutting his eyes to its light, is scarcely less reprehensible than the student of nature who refuses to bend his reason to the evidences of Christianity.

The ambassador of Jesus has nothing to fear while thus communing with God, through the medium of the material universe. The religion he proclaims has always courted such investigations, and prospered in their results. It is in the very sunlight of science that religion flourishes best; and the higher that glorious orb ascends towards his meridian splendor, the stronger does the Christian Temple appear in its foundations, the more beautiful in its design, the more harmonious in its proportions, and the more grand in the entireness of its structure! And what an accumulation of dignity gathers around the office of

him whose prerogative it is thus to stand by these two great sources of all knowledge, and proclaim the truth and glory of Him who reigns over both—the “only wise God and Saviour!” “*I magnify mine office.*”

IV. We contemplate the dignity of the Christian ministry, in the last place, in *the aids that are pledged to it.*

Among these we specially note the *Spirit and Providence* of God. What has already been said sufficiently indicates the estimate we place upon a well-trained ministry. But in the success of the gospel, we are constantly warned against attaching *undue* importance to any amount or fitness of mere *instrumentality*. Though God works by means, and usually renders those most effectual which are best adapted to the ends they are appointed to accomplish, still, let it never be forgotten, that a higher power than any instrumentality can possess, is necessary to render the Word effectual unto salvation. Whatever the ministry may have accomplished for the good of the world, it has accomplished only as a *secondary agency*; the Spirit of God, pledged in its efficacious influence to the ministry, has been the efficient cause of all. “Paul may plant, and Apollos water, but God giveth the increase.” “Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord.” The ambassador of Christ may labor diligently and faithfully, yet will he “spend his strength in vain, and his labor for naught,” unless his ministrations be accompanied with “*power from on high.*” His understanding may be profound, his logic convincing, and his pathos overwhelming; he may “speak in the tongues of men and of angels;” he may press into his service all the force of the theological erudition, and all the resources of science and art; he may seem by his mighty grasp of thought to command a willing tribute from every department of the empire of truth; and yet, if he preach not “*in demonstration of the Spirit and of power,*” he will be but “*as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal.*” It is not within the reach of finite agency to convert a soul. There is in that soul a region of darkness which human genius cannot illumine; a domain of depravity, over which human learning can throw no saving influence; a principle of entrenched evil which no force of human eloquence can ever extirpate, and which will continue to maintain a gloomy and successful resistance till the voice of God proclaim its tyranny at an end! Wit may amuse the fancy, rhetoric may gratify the taste, logic may convince the understanding, and pathos may move the sensibilities; but it is the power of the invincible Spirit alone that can shake the citadel of the heart, and win the soul unto God!

It is the omnipotent energy that stands pledged in perpetuity to the ministry of reconciliation. And how distinguished and glorious is this assurance! When, depressed in view of his own weakness and the greatness of his work, the humble am-

bassador of the cross is constrained to ask, "Who is sufficient for these things?"—he finds, in the promised presence and efficiency of the Spirit, an answer, ever ready and full and cheering, "My sufficiency is of God." Is there any thing the mind can contemplate, more truly sublime and beautiful than this alliance of the weakness of humanity with the strength of Divinity, thus constituting the ministry associate laborers with the eternal God in the regeneration of the world!

But the *Providence* of God is also pledged to aid in the same great enterprise. Christ, the author of the Gospel and the founder of the ministry, is "Head over all things to the Church." Not only by him were all things created, but by him also are they sustained and controlled and made subservient to the accomplishment of his purposes of grace. "The government is upon his shoulder," and He so directs the affairs of earth, that every event which affects persons or communities, every revolution in the world of matter or mind, every commotion that agitates Church or State, is an element of power under his control, and moves in his train to give present success and final triumph to the ministry of reconciliation.

This direction and tendency of things may not be always obvious to our limited comprehension. We can see but parts of what constitutes the mighty whole, and are often constrained to exclaim, "Verily thou art a God that hidest thyself, O God of Israel, the Saviour." We cannot understand how events seemingly the most adverse are made to move the wheels of the chariot of salvation. But so it is. And though darkness frequently enshroud his operations, and his purposes seem to develop through diverse and circuitous channels, yet they at length meet and terminate in the accomplishment of that whereunto they are sent. And though his ways be oftentimes in the great waters, and those waters be frequently agitated by storms, still the Son of God is upon the troubled element, and here and there a billow bending under his footsteps, and here and there a wave ruffled by his movement, reveal to us an Almighty energy that has power to control the tempest, and, when his purposes demand it, to say, "*Peace, be still!*"

Such, then, are the aids secured to the ministry in the work to which it is called. And in view of the divine condescension in thus signaling the agency of imperfect men by lending to it the resources of his energy, the spirit of the holy apostle, dilated with sentiments too sublime for utterance, could only exclaim in the impotence of overwhelming adoration, confidence, and joy, "*I magnify mine office.*"

The same pledges, my brethren, belong to us, and they constitute the basis of our confidence and hope in the work in which we are engaged. Away, then, with despondency! Away with fear! He who has instituted the ministry, who has

chosen the weak things of the world to confound the mighty, has made the result to depend upon nothing less than his own omnipotence. Then "let the heathen rage, and kings set themselves." His counsels shall stand, and he will do all his pleasure. "LO, I AM WITH YOU ALWAYS," is the standing pledge of the final triumph of the work of the ministry. This is the badge of our office; this the shekinah of our sanctuary; this the "hiding of our power," this the motto upon our banner; and BY THIS WE CONQUER!

SERMON DLXVIII.

BY REV. A. L. STONE,

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PRACTICAL ATHEISM.

"Without God in the world."—EPHESIANS II: 12.

A SOUL without God is like the earth without the sun. Quench in the heavens the orb of day, how dark, dumb, and dead would be the earth below! No flush of morning's rising, no genial heat of high noon, no sunset glory. Darkly would the rivers flow, the brooks complain, and the waves of ocean roll. Hushed all the voices of the groves; shut and scentless the flowers; silenced the sounds of busy labor; chained every foot of man;—and poor stricken Nature would lie cold and mute as a corpse, her great, vital heart slowly ceasing to beat. As the sun is the life and light of the natural world, so is God of the spiritual. Where He is not, there is no true life, no real joy, no abiding peace. Without his presence and friendship, the soul is dark and dead, cold and comfortless. It must be visited by an ever-recurring gloom, foreboding of disaster; a sense of want and dread—afraid of God and his judgments. There may be the short-lived intoxications of pleasure; momentary forgetfulness in the heat of some eager race for the world's prizes; the fitful shining of some delusive hope; but, in the pauses of sober thoughtfulness, the shadow comes back, and night resumes its reign.

I wish to speak to you of this desolate condition; of *what it is*; of its *guilt* and *misery*; that, having gained your convictions thus far, I may urge upon you more importunately the free and full offer in the gospel of the divine love and favor.

What is it to be without God in the world? The question

is asked, not of the dwellers in heathen isles, but here, under the blaze of Christian institutions, the light of a Divine revelation shining through all our homes. What is it for one of you, roofed over and walled in by sanctuary privileges this day, to be "*without God?*" We answer,

I. NEGATIVELY—

1. It is not to be without the *knowledge of God*. That sacred name was called over you in solemn ritual, at the font of baptism; you were taught to lisp it when first you clasped your infant palms in prayer. Looking out with wondering eyes upon earth, its streams and flowers and fruits, and up to the sun, shining in his strength, and the moon and stars, you were told that God made them all. With your earliest schooling, one book was put into your hands with signs of reverence, which you took reverently, as the giver said, "*This is God's Book.*" As your days of young mirth circled round, there came always one day when the tumult of your pastimes was softly hushed, and you sat down to learn the nursery rhyme—

"I must not work, I must not play,
Upon *God's* holy Sabbath-day."

And then, with burnished face and fresh attire, you were led slowly, checked in the frolic impulses that would make you leap and shout, to the house of God. This has been your education from the cradle. And now the name of God is familiar to you as household words. His greatness, glory, and majesty; his holiness, justice and truth; his eternity and omnipotence; his revealed will given in the old historic record, and in the code of Sinai—nothing of all this is strange to you now. You have looked upon the symbols of the sacramental board, and know their volumed meaning; and have heard many a time over the feast the chant of this thrilling strain: "*God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.*" And in the ordinances of his Word this God has spoken to you, and you have heard and known his voice; and he has called after you by the accents of his providence and his Spirit, and you could not mistake his utterance; and all this for years, for your lifetime past, so that none of you are ignorant of God; and whatever it may be for one of you, in the sense I mean, to be without God, it cannot be that you are without the *knowledge of God*.

2. It is not to be without the *favours of God*. These fall upon you thick and fast as the snow of orchard blossoms in spring. You cannot help your indebtedness to God for life and all its blessings. Whether you acknowledge him, love him, serve him, or not, it must still and ever be true that he made you, that he preserves you, that he bestows all your good things

upon you. The lips that never praise him, he colors with the red hue of health; the eye never lifted to his throne adoring, he opened on this world of light and beauty; the heart cold at the tale of his boundless compassions, he sends to it every pulsation of life and joy. This thought I would have you carry with you, that the man who lives without God is yet an infinite debtor to his providential goodness. He is not without God, because God has deserted him and left him an outcast on some barren waste, unvisited by kindness and bounty. He may have been greatly favored with worldly good; all his paths may drop fatness; garner and cup overflow; God at his table, loading it; God at his couch, guarding it; God with his sick, healing them; God in his field, making it fruitful; God in his work, making it prosperous; God with his friends, making them kind; God in his plans, giving him foresight; God in his art, giving him skill; God in his trouble, giving him light; God in his peril, giving him safety; God, in every walk of his life, his benefactor, provider, defender, and constant keeper: all this may be, and yet, and though it heighten inexpressibly the guilt of it and the wonder of it, it may still be true that this man, so blessed and favored and courted by kindness, ingrate, and blind, and stony-hearted, is living *without God in the world*.

II. AFFIRMATIVELY—

1. It is to be without God *as an object of love and worship*. The term in our text, translated *without God*, is "*Atheoi*," which has its straightest English in the word Atheists. There are two kinds of atheism: one, speculative or theoretical, the other, virtual and practical; one denying the existence of a God, the other ignoring all his claims to the heart. One is blind of mind, looking out upon a world teeming with wonders, instinct every where, in sky, and earth, and sea, with proof of intelligent skill and design, and discerning no evidence of a Creator; the other is hard of heart, before the full vision of God—unresponsive, unfearing, unloving. Which is the truer, the more real, if not the more literal *atheism*? Which, in the sight of God, is the worst? Is it a greater crime stupidly to mistake the demonstration of God's existence, than to admit that he lives and reigns glorious in holiness, and yet pay him no reverence? The practical atheist is one who believes that God is, and yet trembles not; that he is a great King, and yet brings no homage; that his tender mercies are over all his works, and yet offers no thanksgiving; that he will by no means clear the guilty, and yet has no terror; that he will come to judgment, and yet goes smilingly forward toward the great white throne, unawed, and stout of heart. God is seated on the circle of the heavens; the earth is his footstool; his face is veiled with light; adoringly the angelhood cast their crowns before him; his hand moves the worlds in space: this puny mortal beholds,

comprehends, believes; but bows not, worships not, bends no knee, lifts no song; lives, as though God, with all his awfulness, glory, and goodness, were not. Is he not an *atheist*? When does he worship God? Not when the day wakes him—he rises without prayer; not when the night disrobes him—he lies down without prayer; not when his feast is spread—he returns no thanks before he eats. Does he *ever* kneel, does he *ever* say, “*Our Father*,” and does he love when he does not worship? Do all his warm affections go up incense-like to the skies? Is the language of his heart and his lips, “Whom have I in heaven but thee, and there is none on earth I desire beside thee?” Does any human ear ever hear him say that; does God’s ear ever hear it; does his heart ever think it? If he loved God, could he be denied communion with him? But where is his closet? If he loved him, he would love to be like him; for there is no Scripture truer than that *every man is like his God*. If he loved him, he would do his will, for the appeal of the Saviour is unanswerable: “If ye love me, keep my commandments.” Does he love God? He would love his law, the perfect transcript of his character: he would love his Son, the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person; he would love to meditate upon his glorious perfections.

Is there no one of you who studiously and habitually keeps God out of thought? When do you pray to him? When do you show an attachment to him that enthrones him, in your regard, above every object beloved beside, in all the universe? How often do you even think of him? Perhaps when he makes his tempests roar about you; when he speaks in the thunder-volley; when the glance of his eye in the steely lightning flashes across your path; when he lifts your sea-craft on the stormy wave; when he sends death over your threshold; in such approaches, possibly, you think of him, for you cannot help it—you are made afraid at his power; but, oh! do your thoughts cling lovingly, constantly, filially, to his name? Do you not live, for the most part, as though there were “nothing above to excite awe, nothing around to awaken tenderness?” And are you not thus *atheoi*, “*without God* in the world?”

2. It is to be without God *in the plans and toils of life*. Each of you has his labor. Its call breaks your morning slumber; you are seen bending to it in the heat of day. Scarce do you dismiss it from your thought as you press again the pillow. You tax your utmost sagacity; you match all your wit and cunning against other men’s, in laying your plans. How eager, how busy, how absorbed you are in this hurrying to and fro of every day! For some reason, your very heart is in it. Your interest is unfeigned, cordial, intense. There is nothing like insincerity or lukewarmness in your untiring, heroic devotion to these pursuits. What is the animating principle? What

so inspires and sustains you? What pleasant thought have you as the sweetener of toil, when the beaded drops stand on your brow, and your loins ache, and your eyes are dim? Have you heard the voice out of heaven, "Whether therefore ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God?" Nay, he who lives without God in the world, has shut him out from all life's burdened schemes. God is to have no reverence from all his work. The sustaining nerve of his laborious hours; the pleasant thought that takes the bitterness from his sweat; the grand aim kept before him like the pole-star to the mariner, is not the divine glory in his eating, and drinking, and doing. It is well if his plans do not, in themselves, contravene the will of God; if his creed of morals in buying and selling, and conducting his worldly affairs, do not conflict with that great second law, like unto the first: "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself;" if his methods of getting and holding property do not cross some one or more of the edicts thundered forth from the Mount of the desert; if he be not secretly or openly a violater of the principles of common honor and honesty. But if he be unimpeachable in matters like these, how truly is he still without God, to have no commanding reference in all this fruitful industry of his years to Him whose steward he is, and who said to him, "Go work to day in my vineyard, and whatsoever is right *I will give you.*"

3. It is to be without God *as a refuge in time of trial.* In the hour of temptation, who is safe if God be not his keeper? I address young men whose way of life in a city like this is a fiery ordeal for virtue and principle, through which, oh! how few pass unscathed! Your natural counsellors, they whose name and lineage you bear, are distant or dead. The siren song of pleasure is in your ear; the vices, robed in gay apparel, court you; your heart is bounding with the quick, hot blood of youth. The home voices—voices of affectionate entreaty, voices of prayer, heard of God in the night-vigils—are afar off; in secrecy and darkness you may walk unwatched whither you will; the chains of perilous companionship are around you, tightening like the coil of serpents; worldly ambition plies you; examples of successful fraud and villany tempt you; on the verge of such abysses you walk, and walk *without God.* When you reel and grow giddy in these slippery places, you have no hand divine to hold by, no closet fortress to retreat to, no shield of faith to cast before you, no God under whose shadowing wings to hide, no spell of invincible potency like this, to bear back the encircling perils: "My Father, be thou the guide of my youth." How will you escape?

And there are times of trial that gather, gloomy and dark, around the path of men of capital and business and great enterprises, whose shocks will drive them from all their moorings, if

they be not anchored within the veil. Let the pressure of a commercial crisis come upon them; their confidence in resources they thought stable be shaken; one embarrassment crowd close upon the heels of another; loss follow loss; their hopes of gain go by the board; and the desperate struggle commence to keep their head above water, and hold up a name and credit never yet tarnished: what shall help them fight the battle through; what shall rally hope and courage, and renerve the fainting heart with elastic strength? Thus oppressed by care and distress of mind, a man wants supernatural help and comfort, the presence and friendship of God, confidence in an overruling, all-wise, all-merciful Providence, pledged by covenant to bless and succor him. He is not safe without such keeping. His principles are not safe, his judgment is not safe, his reason is not safe. The dear ones under his roof, all dependent upon him, weigh him down in this trial: what will become of them if he sinks in this struggle? His head is perhaps already gray; he cannot begin again at the foot of the hill and climb with the vigor that once braced his limbs. Hope droops with age; and ever as the horizon grows darker, and ruin stares him closer, he trembles on the brink of some great, terrible, final disaster, some rash, guilty act, some hopeless wreck of integrity—perhaps madness. Miserable, miserable man, without God as a refuge in this his extremest need!—And every man has his one chief treasure, which will at some time suffer invasion and drive him to sorest straits. Touch him any where else, and he will keep his fortitude; touch him there, you touch the apple of his eye. One man will bear the loss of any thing but his property; strip him of that, and he cries, like poor Micah against the children of Dan, *Ye have taken away my gods, and what have I more?* Another will bear the loss of property, but cannot bury his children. A third can endure these bereavements, but cannot keep up under the loss of reputation. And in any of these providences that smite down the idol, whither shall the sufferer turn? He has no refuge in God—what hand shall soothe and heal his smart; what star of hope shall guide him through? Such discipline with a good man only brings him nearer to God. The blessings removed are but links taken from the shortening chain that binds him to the Giver; but, falling on the defenseless head of one that hath no ark to shelter him, these storms beat down all his strength, and quite crush him to the earth. O, wretched, perilous lot, to be without God in the griefs and woes, the temptations and cares of life!

4. In the last place: to be without God in the world is to be without him *as the final portion of the soul*. I have spoken of the waves of earthly trouble and calamity, but there is another wave to be encountered: none can escape it; the prosperous, the unfortunate alike must meet it. I see it gathering way; it

lifts its dark crest and sweeps on toward you with its resistless surge; it will go over you and over you, and the places that knew you in these walks of time will know you no more. It is the surge of death. And behind this billow yet another, towering and rolling on, its vast ridges flashing upon the eye in broken reflection the light of eternity; and this is the wave of judgment. Better could Peter walk the stormy sea of Galilee without the Saviour's hand, than you can front these surges without God as your portion. Oh, to find heart and flesh failing, the world receding, the retributive future opening, and no God reconciled in Christ; to be called to take leave of houses and lands, and silver and gold, and badges of office, and wife and children, and go the way of all the earth, with no upward mounting of hope and faith, to the Father's presence; to stand in daily reach of such a summons, unknowing when the freezing accents shall sound, "This night thy soul shall be required of thee;" and to look forward, as often as this peradventure suggests itself, to a lowering eternity—what an utterly unportioned state is this? Can any of you be content in it, smile in it, love it, prefer it to the estate of an accepted child of God? *To be without God* in the midst of life and health, this is desolate enough; but to lie down with your last sickness; to be given over of human helpers; to see farewells in every sad glance that meets yours; to feel the death-dew gathering on your forehead, and *then* to be without God; to hear no voice through the silence, saying, *Fear not, I am with thee; be not dismayed, I am thy God*; to enter the dark valley with no rod and staff to comfort you; to behold on the descending way you take no light streaming down from the opened gates and the glory within; you must, you must anticipate this scene, you must now look this gloomy picture in the face, if you mean to provide for it. Could you so depart hence and venture with such auspices and omens upon immortality?

Oh, be entreated to-day, all you, consciously living without God in this world of trial, change, and sorrow, in hourly peril too of dying without God. Our joyous mission to you is to offer you the friendship of God; to announce to you this inspiring, inviting truth, that "*God is in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself*," "*Seek him while he may be found, call upon him while he is near*," "*Enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret*," "*Acquaint now thyself with him, and be at peace*." Who of you will be first to lift the cry, in brokenness of heart, "God be merciful to me a sinner!" Oh, how many may follow you; what a train you may lead after you! Let nothing deter you; let nothing delay you. *Without God*, "'tis endless ruin, deep despair;" *with him*, 'tis peace, joy, hope, the bliss of heaven.

BE STILL.

It is often easier to *do* than to *suffer* the will of God. There is a pleasurable excitement in the employment of one's active powers in the service of Christ, a satisfaction in the consciousness of doing good. A little grace, with favoring providence, may make a Christian hero; while abounding grace alone will suffice to make a Christian martyr.

Be still when persecuted and slandered. If unjustly accused, you may regard every epithet of abuse as a badge of discipleship. Your divine Master and his apostles and witnesses were marked in the same way. Then, too, every lie has the seeds of death within it. Let alone, it will die of itself. Opposition may look very formidable: it may seem as though "the mountains were carried into the midst of the sea; the waters thereof roar, and be troubled; the mountains shake with the swelling thereof; but the voice of wisdom cries, "Be still, and know that I am God."

Be still when thwarted in your plans and disappointed in your hopes. You are not responsible for results. If you have sought trustworthy ends by lawful means, and have done your utmost to attain them, the issue is of divine ordering, and should be no more the subject of murmuring or repining than the changes of the seasons or the rolling of the spheres. The purpose of God in your loss or disappointment may not be obvious. You may have to content yourself with the thought, "These are but parts of his ways." But the fact that they *are his ways* must hush the soul in quietude under the most trying and mysterious crosses of life. Faith will take up Cowper's song:

"Behind a frowning providence
He hides a smiling face."

Be still under sore afflictions. They are all ordered of God. They are embraced among the "all things" that shall work together for good to them that love God. Murmuring does not lessen, but rather increases the burden of griefs. Submitted to—acquiesced in—sanctified—every sorrow may distil new joys; every affliction may work out "a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." Many a saint has never experienced the infinite preciousness of the gospel, until the rod of God is upon him. It is when in the vale, with eyes uplifted and the mouth closed—"I was dumb"—that the stars of promise glisten on the spiritual vision, and the Sun of righteousness darts his rays of comfort and holy joy on the stricken soul.